

VIRGINIA
CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES
DELIVERY SYSTEM
PLANNING REPORT 1998

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Section I: Summary of LSCV and Virginia Legal Services Programs Planning Efforts from 1991 to 1998

1991: In 1991, The Virginia State Bar commissioned Virginia Commonwealth University to conduct surveys of indigent citizens and practicing attorneys in the state about the unmet civil legal services needs of indigent Virginians and to report the results of those surveys. Issued in July, 1991, the report, *Pro Bono And The Legal Needs of Indigent Virginians*, stated the following major findings: 1) that 41% of low-income households surveyed reported having a legal problem at least once during the prior three years; 2) that households that experienced legal problems tended to experience multiple problems; 3) that legal assistance for the problems cited was rarely obtained (84% lacked a lawyer to help them face a legal problem); 4) that poor people who experienced legal problems usually did not seek legal help; 5) that most legal problems of the poor affected basic necessities like food, shelter health and family; and 6) that awareness of the availability of fee or low-cost legal assistance was very low.

1992-1993: In August of 1991, the Virginia State Bar (VSB) and the Virginia Bar Association (VBA) appointed a 10 member Joint Committee to Study Legal Services in Virginia. The Blue Ribbon Committee, as it came to be known, was charged with studying the system for providing legal services to Virginia's poor population and making recommendations on ways to improve that system. In February, 1993, the Committee issued a formal report (**Attachment 1**) that made findings and recommendations on most aspects of the civil legal services delivery system in Virginia.

The Blue Ribbon Committee, comprised of bar and judicial leaders from every geographic region in the state, addressed many of the issues that LSC asked programs to address in the current process including the delivery system structure, funding and pro bono resources. The Committee met, held hearings, and gathered information for a year and a half and concluded that the local staff/attorney field program model governed by local boards was the most efficient and effective way to deliver high quality legal services in Virginia. Its central recommendation concerning program configuration was that more satellite offices be added as funding became available. Virginia, then, as now, has 32 field program offices serving low-income clients. The Committee preferred the local board authority model because it allowed Legal Services Corporation of Virginia (LSCV) to concentrate on broader issues.

The Committee made many recommendations in its report regarding an enhanced role in the system for LSCV, which, at the time, was primarily a fundraising organization. It suggested LSCV coordinate and integrate more of the local program administrative activities and play a greater role in oversight and accountability of programmatic work.

1994: In response to the Report of the Joint Committee to Study Legal Services in Virginia, the LSCV Board of Directors engaged in a long-range planning process that resulted in the adoption by the Board of a Strategic Plan in May, 1994 (**Attachment 2**). Most of the goals in LSCV's Strategic Plan and the recommendations in the Joint Committee Report have been accomplished.

1995: On July 10, 1995, LSC asked the legal services programs in Virginia and across the country to begin planning for the future of the delivery of legal services to the indigent. The request was based on LSC's assumption at the time that federal funding for the provision of legal aid assistance would be substantially reduced in 1996 and that the types of assistance permitted by legal services grantees would be restricted.

On August 31, 1995, LSC expanded its planning request to legal services providers by specifying areas of consideration in planning. The specified areas included 1) Integration of LSC funded programs into a statewide legal services system; 2) Compliance with ABA Standards and advisability of consolidation of programs into entities of sufficient size to deliver services effectively; 3) Consideration of intake and the provision of advice and brief services; 4) Use of technology; 5) Engagement of pro bono attorneys in a broad range of activities; 6) Development of additional resources; and 7) Transition to the new system with a minimum of disruption to client services.

Although LSCV coordinated and funded the 1995 planning process, the statewide support center, VPLC drafted the report and submitted it to LSC on behalf of the Virginia Legal Services Programs (**Attachment 3**). That report specified many goals that the planning group wanted to accomplish over the long term, that responded directly to the LSC specified areas of consideration. A number of statewide committees were created to accomplish those various goals. Subsequently, a combination of pressures and circumstances contributed to the eventual fizzling out of the various statewide committees that had been assigned specific tasks in relation to the report to LSC. First, LSCV and local program boards and staff had to immediately and continuously focus on finding other resources and replacement funding for lost federal funds just to keep the delivery system viable. Second, LSC provided no response or feedback to Virginia's report. Third, the statewide committees created to accomplish many of the goals stated in the report were comprised of many local program case handlers, already overburdened with day to day representation of clients.

1996-1997: Even though LSC did not provide a response to Virginia's report, LSCV's Board of Directors was concerned enough with the potential effects that federal funding cuts and new restrictions on advocacy could have on Virginia's service delivery system to convene a Special Delivery System Study Committee (SDSSC). During 1996 and 1997, this statewide committee of LSCV board members met regularly and received vast amounts of data from program directors, outside sources and other states to determine if funding cuts and restrictions on advocacy required major reconfiguration of Virginia's service delivery system.

The Special Delivery System Study Committee reported to the LSCV Board in April, 1997 (**Attachment 4**). SDSSC made many findings and recommendations including a resolution of the LSCV Board adopted and provided to Virginia's Congressional delegation opposing the onerous restrictions placed on program work by Congress and especially the extension of restrictions to work performed with non LSC funds. As of January 1996, the case existed where a smaller source (LSC funds) tainted the largest overall source (LSCV funds). SDSSC also

recommended the creation of a new non-LSC funded statewide migrant services program, a fully funded statewide support center to assist in providing clients with a full range of services and encouraged programs that reported negative impacts on their work from federal restrictions to work with other programs to develop innovative methods to provide a full range of services to clients.

SDSSC recommendations led to a fully funded statewide support center, replacement funds to field programs for lost federal funds, and the creation of a new statewide migrant and immigrant services program in conjunction with a non-LSC funded field program.

1997-1998: At the instigation of former LSCV Board President, Jack Harris, and with the participation of LSCV board members, leaders of the major statewide bars and other statewide groups that support the provision of legal services to the poor were invited to join The Committee On Access to Justice in Virginia. The primary focus of this group is to maintain and increase funding for Virginia's legal services delivery system. The Committee worked successfully with LSCV staff and board prior to and during the 1998 Virginia General Assembly session to increase LSCV's general revenue fund appropriation (**Attachment 5**).

Section II: Current Planning Process

A. Introduction: On February 12, 1998, all LSC funded programs in Virginia received LSC Program Letter 98-1. This program letter and its progeny instructed states to again engage in planning around specified areas of consideration or to further engage in planning processes already begun or ongoing since the 1995 LSC program letter.

Virginia programs like those in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania had been awarded two year grants rather than the expected three year grants during the 1998 LSC funding competition cycle. LSC stated two specific reasons for the shorter grant period: 1) to encourage recipients in these states to develop further their plans for a comprehensive, integrated statewide delivery system; and 2) concern that the number of LSC funded programs in these states may not constitute the most economical and effective configuration for delivering legal services to the low-income community.

LSCV was asked by LSC to coordinate this planning process and in April, the LSCV Board agreed to coordinate and fund the process. In May, 1998, LSC President John McKay and LSC's Virginia responsible person, Bob Gross met with LSCV and local program directors in Richmond and explained in more detail what was expected of the process. LSCV retained the services of an experienced facilitator and with the assistance of the Virginia Poverty Law Center's (VPLC) Training Coordinator, coordinated monthly meetings of the Virginia planning group around the state to address the issues posed by LSC's program letter. The planning group met from June through October and the following action plan is the result.

The actual planning group consisted mainly of the LSCV, VPLC (Virginia's statewide

support center) and local program directors with occasional participation by representatives of the statewide bars, LSCV board members and other interested parties who responded to a stakeholders invitation letter sent to hundreds of organizations and individuals. The lack of actual meeting participation by many of Virginia legal services supporters can be attributed to several factors. First, since the creation of LSCV over 20 years ago, state bar leaders and other groups have generally deferred to the LSCV board and staff to perform long range planning and day to day functions associated with the coordination and funding of the legal services delivery system in Virginia. LSCV was in fact created by these stakeholders for those very reasons and they expect LSCV to provide oversight and accountability for the system. Their role has been one of support and advocacy of LSCV's and the local programs' work. Bar and other community leaders make up LSCV's and local programs' boards and they are called upon on a daily basis sometimes to assist LSCV with legislative and other contacts. And the Bars work closely with programs on a daily basis to coordinate the provision of pro bono services through legal services programs. In short, our supporters tend to have first hand knowledge of our efficiency and effectiveness. Except for the universal recognition by our supporters of the woefully inadequate funding provided for the system, and the universal abhorrence of federal restrictions on the work of Virginia's programs, they have had no significant reason to question the efficiency and effectiveness of Virginia's legal services programs. In addition, from the time of the Blue Ribbon Committee study through the current process, legal services supporters have devoted a great deal of time to what has become a fairly constant planning process and are probably burnt out by the constant attention we seem to require. We are very mindful of the stress volunteers are asked to assume and the negative impact it can have on the day to day contributions we ask of them.

Regardless of LSCV's, local programs' and programs' supporters' disagreement with the premises of LSC Program Letter 98-1, and our belief that we do a lot of things well in Virginia, it was determined jointly by LSCV and its grantees that the planning process should be engaged in not only to report to LSC, but to develop accomplishable action plans that address identifiable gaps and inconsistencies in the system that, if improved would result in better service to clients.

The development of these action plans are our recognition that there are many things we can do better that will result in a more client responsive system and we appreciate LSC's help in identifying many of those issues where a more integrated approach to service delivery should in fact accomplish that.

B. The Planning Process: The Legal Services Action Plan constitutes a framework for on-going work within the legal services system and for outreach and involvement with the greater community of individuals and groups concerned with ensuring legal access to all Virginians.

The Plan is responsive to the seven key questions posed by the LSC Program Letter 98-1. Nevertheless, the focus is enhancement of service delivery within the Commonwealth. The plan builds on the state's unique structure and heritage to meet the needs of poverty populations that

may differ in accordance with geography, culture and rural or urban circumstances.

The Action Plan is more than the organized outline of goals, strategies and action items corresponding to the seven broad topic areas in the federal program letter. It establishes strategic direction for the Virginia Legal Services Delivery System. The direction encompasses previous planning efforts and thoughtful and intensive debate during the current process.

The strategic direction established by the current planning process moves the system toward:

Greater integration within and among programs so that clients will receive and staff will provide a full range of consistent and high quality services;

A continuing and enhanced role for LSCV as the locus of program oversight, accountability and planning implementation.

It was determined that the process would produce a plan for Virginia within the context of the questions in the LSC planning letter, but not be restricted by its parameters. Although, goals and strategies establish overall direction, implementation focuses on selected areas to optimize effectiveness and allocation of resources.

Virginia Context: The Legal Services Delivery System in Virginia is rooted in a rich tradition of locally delivered services with varying levels of state coordination. Legal Services are provided by independent local programs many of which are the product of merged neighborhood legal aid societies. LSCV was instrumental in the formation of several programs in the 1970s that finally brought the potential for legal representation to low-income Virginians in every city and county in the state. Over the past 25 years, with LSC and LSCV funding as the basis of their support, Virginia's local programs have developed strong bases of local support augmenting resources with local, United Way and other funding, as well as pro bono and other volunteer resources. Relationships with local legislators, courts and other legal and human services organizations have solidified local programs identities as respected institutions in their communities. More importantly, the relationships developed over time between local programs and their state and federal legislators and other community groups, as well as with local attorneys, has been the most significant contribution to the enhancement of state and IOLTA funding. Virginia's local programs are identifiable institutions in their communities long recognized for their exceptional work. This translates into support on a statewide level for appropriations and a very successful IOLTA program.

LSCV: LSCV has played an integral role in presenting a statewide identity for local programs at the Virginia General Assembly and other statewide forums. Virginia's federal and state legislators know their local programs through local boards and staff, but also perceive them as part of an integrated delivery system, the focal point of which is LSCV. Indeed, LSCV's legislative approach over the years has successfully taken advantage of a statewide network of key contacts to support its central lobbying role. Although these key

contacts include program directors, staff and board, they extend into the community and include bar leaders, city and county government officials, human services organizations and religious leaders. LSCV's coordination of this network has led to many successes including the establishment of a filing fee add-on appropriation in 1992, on-going general revenue appropriations and the legislative conversion of the IOLTA program to LSCV administration. LSCV is also the state contact and lobbyist for programs' federal funds and works closely with NLADA, NAIP and the ABA on federal funding issues. It produces many materials that coordinate the overall funding effort including the annual LSCV Report of Operations, the annual Grantee Activity Report, congressional district fact sheets, a biannual key contact lobbying guidebook and various IOLTA materials (**Attachment 6**).

Even with the almost \$2 million reduction in federal funding in 1996, overall funding for Virginia's delivery system has continued to increase and for the first time, will exceed \$15 million in fiscal year 1998-99. This is a tribute, not only to LSCV's and local programs' successes at the state legislature, but to tremendous efforts by local programs to increase other current funding sources and find new ones. Since taking over administration of the IOLTA program in 1995, LSCV has substantially increased net IOLTA revenue by working with banks to lower charges and fees, so that they now amount to only 11% of gross IOLTA revenue. The number of IOLTA accounts has been increased since 1995 to over 4000 in a voluntary program, the same level that existed prior to 1995 when the program required mandatory participation by Virginia lawyers. Again, this kind of voluntary participation by banks and lawyers is a result of the strong support of local communities for their legal services programs.

The integration of LSCV and local program work also allows LSCV to play an important role in local issues. LSCV frequently assists programs with local and other funding sources and provides political insulation from ideological attacks on local program work. LSCV mediates and resolves questions from legislators and other government officials on controversial cases involving local, migrant and statewide support programs.

LSCV is the statewide entity that supports sound management of legal services programs across the Commonwealth. It allocates and administers appropriations and IOLTA funds, provides administrative support and training for local programs, coordinates health insurance and financial auditing groups for local programs and provides accountability for local use of its funds.

Since LSC ended its peer review evaluations of programs when federal funding was reduced in 1996, LSCV has implemented its own grantee review and evaluation system. Annual desk audits began this year along with a new grantee application and reporting system that greatly increases standardization and consistency in reporting and supplying information to LSCV (**Attachment 7**). It also provides the ability to present a coherent quantitative and qualitative picture of local programmatic work from a statewide perspective. Charted information from this evaluation process contributed to Virginia's planning effort by providing clear evidence of many programmatic functions for which action plans were created to achieve more consistency and

statewide integration. Through representation on LSCV's Board and Committees, local programs were equal participants in the creation of this new evaluation system. This participation exemplifies the close daily interaction between LSCV and its grantees.

VPLC: The Virginia Poverty Law Center is the other key statewide program that contributes to the high degree of Virginia's delivery system coordination. With most of its funding provided by LSCV, VPLC, as Virginia Legal Services' statewide support center has not lost viability or effectiveness as a result of federal defunding. In fact, its effectiveness has been enhanced since 1996 and its importance to the delivery system cannot be overstated. During the 1995 and 1996 planning process, local programs unanimously encouraged LSCV to replace all lost federal funds for VPLC.

With its staff of substantive law specialists, VPLC coordinates and conducts statewide poverty law training, and provides case support and expertise to local programs' staffs. VPLC is also the delivery system's legislative advocacy organization presenting, defending and challenging substantive bills at Virginia's General Assembly that affect low-income Virginians. It coordinates many other legal and non-legal service organizations in these efforts and over the years, has built a solid reputation and gained the respect of Virginia legislators, who often rely on VPLC for guidance and input.

VPLC fosters inter-program communication and integration with its substantive law task forces and brief and pleadings banks and poverty law publications. Finally, VPLC conducts Virginia's Annual Statewide Training Conference where the majority of local program staffs and boards train, meet and reinforce the community vision.

Virginia Center For Justice: With federal funding reductions and new federal restrictions on advocacy in 1996, the ability of Virginia's federally funded migrant services program to provide a full range of services to clients was limited. In response, the LSCV Special Delivery System Study Committee recommended withdrawal of financial support from the federally funded program and now funds the Virginia Center For Justice, a component of the Charlottesville-Albemarle Legal Aid Society funded wholly with non-LSC funds. Virginia now has a centrally located statewide migrant worker and immigrant services program.

Federal Context: The federal context for the planning process derives from a series of actions by Congress which reduced federal funding for legal services nationwide and placed restrictions on the uses of all funds received by federally funded legal services programs. A series of program letters were promulgated by LSC focusing on planning to address funding reductions and subsequently to streamline operations and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided to clients.

The impetus for the current Virginia Legal Services Action Plan is Federal Program Letter 98-1 and subsequent explanatory letters and information. The program letter expresses goals and expectations for the planning process and requests responses to seven key planning

questions. Federal goals are to achieve careful planning and coordination to 1) insure that pressing legal needs do not go unmet, and 2) that resources are used wisely and economically.

Planning expectations amplify on these goals and stress that there are many ways that they can be achieved. Participants are instructed to evaluate what works best in their state to achieve an even stronger, more effective system. A particular focus is the examination of how the present configuration of programs, and specifically the number of programs impacts the overall effectiveness of the state delivery system. Client services should be viewed from a statewide perspective.

The seven planning questions are intended to highlight ways in which states can continue to innovate and develop strategies and alternative service delivery models to reach more clients and provide higher quality services with scarce resources.

Planning Questions

1) How are intake and delivery of advice and referral services structured within the state? What steps can be taken to ensure a delivery network that maximizes client access, efficient delivery, and high quality legal services?

2) Is there a state legal services technology plan? How can technological capacities be developed statewide to assure compatibility, promote efficiency, improve quality and expand services to clients?

3) What are the major barriers low-income persons face in gaining access to justice in the state? What efforts can be undertaken on a statewide basis to expand client access to the courts, provide preventive legal education and advice, and enhance self-help opportunities for low-income persons?

4) Do program staff and pro bono attorneys throughout the state receive the training and have access to information and expert legal assistance necessary for the delivery of high quality legal services? How can statewide capacities be developed and strengthened to meet those needs?

5) What is the status of private attorney involvement in the state? What statewide efforts can be undertaken to increase the involvement of private attorneys in the delivery of legal services?

6) What statewide financial resources are available for legal services to low-income persons within the state? How can these resources be preserved and expanded?

7) Where there are a number of LSC-funded programs and/or the presence of very small programs, how should the legal services programs be configured within the state to maximize the

effective and economical delivery of high quality legal services to eligible clients within a comprehensive integrated delivery system?

For each question, planners are asked to 1) assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current approach; 2) establish goals to strengthen and expand services to eligible clients; and 3) determine the major steps and timetable necessary to achieve these goals.

Planning Approach in Virginia: The planning approach in Virginia takes into account the local, state and federal contexts. Five day-long planning sessions were held and each meeting established the basis for the next meeting. Participants were able to work from summaries of previous proceedings. As needed, LSCV provided data summaries of program operations and practices.

Meeting One: Participants reviewed the questions in the context of previous planning efforts and determined the purposes and parameters of the plan.

Meeting Two: Participants adopted a working vision for this planning process and initiated the assessment process. The assessment was conceptual in nature and drew extensively on the system and program knowledge of the project directors and others. For each question, the group intensively discussed the current situation and desirable future. Questions posed for this discussion were intended to elicit a statewide perspective. They included: 1) What happens now? 2) What would you like to achieve statewide? 3) What contributes to (helps) achieving what is desired? 4) What hinders achieving what is desired?

Meeting Three: Participants reviewed and revised portions of the assessment summary and addressed planning questions not addressed at the previous meeting. In addition to the generic assessment discussion, participants developed and assessed structural options pertaining to question number seven. Question number one also served as a model for initiating the goal setting process for each question.

Meeting Four: Participants discussed broad themes emerging from the discussion of individual questions. They adopted three broad themes as the strategic direction for this planning process. They also began the process of developing goals to achieve the desired changes in the system. For some goals, broad strategies and action items were also identified.

Meeting Five: Participants reconsidered each question in sequence. As needed, language was refined and gaps in the plan addressed. The primary focus was implementation. Primary responsibility and target dates were assigned to applicable action items. Formal priorities were not established, but practical priorities emerged in the time frames and detail associated with certain areas of the plan.

C. Planning Continuity: Participants in the planning process strove to create a flexible framework for future work. Although the plan is comprehensive in scope, it is not a

stand alone document. It reflects previous planning while taking into account social, political and economic factors that affect clients.

The Action Plan emphasizes a more integrated service system and changes that improve the quality and range of client services. This commitment, along with a recognition of what is already done well, and avoidance of change for the sake of change, reflects purposes expressed in earlier planning documents. As the LSCV Special Delivery System Subcommittee stated in its report: “Faced with the reality of 13 distinct programs, the common theme of inter-program collaboration permeates our recommendations as we strongly feel that a cooperative effort is absolutely necessary for each of us to continue to provide quality services to clients.”

Working Vision:

Our vision of equal justice envisions a structure that empowers low-income individuals and groups to define, promote and protect their legitimate interests through the civil justice system, and in so doing, breathes life into the notion of fundamental fairness and the rule of law.

D. Action Plan Summary: Although in many ways continuing long term commitments, the Action Plan is an up-to-date representation of current needs and solutions. The Plan is responsive to the questions in the federal letter and organized in that order. Goals are based on assessment of the current and desired situation related to each question. Strategies and action items are feasible and compatible. In subsequent sections of this report, the total plan is outlined in terms of closely related goals, strategies and action items. This summary highlights the background assessment that led to the goals.

1. Intake and Delivery of Advice and Referral Services: Intake methods vary between programs in Virginia. Although there is more consistency than variation, and legal services programs have been working with LSCV over the past few years to achieve even more consistency, the planning process highlighted variations that include: phone systems, initial “real person” vs. “machine” contact with clients; differences in financial eligibility (three programs still cut off eligibility at 100% of poverty) depending on funding source used to serve clients; differences in case acceptance policies and/or program priorities (set by local boards; differences include substantive areas and the geographic location of clients); differences in program response time after initial contact by client, both in rejecting, referring and onset of services if client application accepted; differences in availability of 800 numbers, although most programs have them; and differences in methods of informing clients of acceptance or rejection.

Delivery of advice and referral services also varies significantly between programs. Some programs deliver brief advice services by staff to accepted clients during initial client contact; some deliver advice by staff by phone call back and in person contact; at least six programs deliver brief advice services through a combination of staff and pro bono hotlines. The pro bono hotlines operated by six programs under the auspices of the Virginia Bar Association

(VBA) has been very successful in most of those programs. At least two of the pro bono hotlines have not succeeded to date and the affected programs and the VBA continue to explore ways to correct perceived problems. Generally, hotlines have not succeeded in program service areas where overall pro bono support has been weak or ineffective.

Approximately 70% of closed cases in the system are resolved with advice and brief service. Urban areas have higher concentrations of clients and a greater range of resources including large law firms and social service organizations. At least one rural program with one of the most successful pro bono programs in the country, is reluctant to institute a pro bono hotline to the detriment of its very successful program that emphasizes extended representation by its pro bono panel members. That program is currently discussing the possibility of an experimental project with an urban program that has a very successful hotline. The general idea would be to conduct a hotline for clients in the rural area with pro bono attorneys from the urban area.

A significant issue that planners agree must be addressed in conjunction with differences in case acceptance policies, intake methods, and brief services is the definition of a “case”. With the understanding that LSC will soon issue a new CSR handbook, LSCV will assess that to determine if it addresses current inconsistencies in Virginia and if not, work with LSC to address those concerns.

Desired for the future is the capacity throughout the state to respond more consistently and quickly to client needs with efficient, high quality, and client-sensitive services. This would require overcoming perceived differences within and among programs that include variations in case acceptance policies and response time, geographic barriers and user friendly procedures for clients. Consistency would be advanced through a model case acceptance framework, uniform case definitions, quality standards for brief services and extended representation, reliable statistical information and consistent outreach, education and client information.

The case acceptance model would address real and perceived differences while providing a process for documenting the reasons for exceptions. With better technology, methods of responding to geographically dispersed clients can be investigated and include combinations of staff and pro bono resources, not necessarily on-site, but perhaps in the pro bono attorneys’ offices. Adoption of new methods, however, should not lose local focus or flexibility to tailor services.

LSCV ‘s Grantee Review and Evaluation system is the logical framework to ensure program implementation of more consistent statewide standards. The evaluation method includes grant contract conditions, annual desk audits and on-site review, when necessary. (See Attachment # 7). LSCV will also add staff to specifically coordinate and implement new standards of integration.

The following goals with supporting strategies and action items will address these needs.

I. Intake and Delivery of Advice and Referral Services

Goal One: Enhance the state-wide consistency, quality and timeliness of intake and advice and referral services through greater standardization among and within programs.

Strategies:

- (a) Ensure standard definitions for managing and reporting case related activities
- (b) Specify reasonable expectations for all programs to meet in providing timely intake services
- (c) Address perceived inconsistencies in language and practice among programs regarding case acceptance and financial eligibility.

Action Items:

- LSCV add staff to support integration planning among programs
- Develop a standard model for case acceptance and financial eligibility with uniform definitions
- Establish benchmarks for the time by which intake activities are accomplished in every program
- Develop standard definitions of case, case action, case closure and related terms

Goal Two: Ensure that on-going program operations measurably enhance system integration on behalf of clients

Strategies:

- (a) Involve programs in developing meaningful and achievable statewide standards
- (b) Ensure process steps to assess and document reasons for exceptions
- (c) Monitor system wide compliance on a regular and objective basis

Action Items:

- Programs develop action plans to conform their policies or document reasonable exceptions
- LSCV requires reporting in standardized formats, supported by consistent technology, to the extent feasible
- LSCV monitors program activity through the evaluation and grants processes

Goal Three: Improve client access to intake by increased sharing of resources and technology among programs

Strategies:

- (a) Develop methods for programs to share pro bono resources
- (b) Develop a consistent body of information to be provided electronically when

- offices are closed or phone lines are busy
- (c) Provide the basic electronic information through local programs with cooperation among individual programs

Action Items:

- Develop the capacity to electronically provide callers with basic information about legal services and programs
- Develop the capacity to gather basic client information (i.e. name, phone number and reason for call) when offices are closed or lines are busy

Goal Four: Develop statewide standards of practice and quality control for advice only and on-going representation cases and review mechanisms for intake to ensure correct advice and representation when necessary

Goal Five: Ensure that each program monitors the impact of restrictions on clients and develops feasible ways for clients to have available a lawyer with an appropriate range of legal options

Strategies:

- (a) Encourage each program to develop the best feasible methods for providing clients with a lawyer with the same range of options as a private attorney
- (b) Review the impact of restrictions on particular clients and offer a feasible response to providing representation including going to court when necessary
- (c) Increase pro bono and other resources across the state

Action Items:

- Identify a range of resources within each service area
- Access VPLC resources for cases with statewide parameters
- Arrange for purchase of legal services from another program or elsewhere, as necessary

Goal Six: Ensure service access to special needs populations including persons with disabilities and persons for whom English is not a first language

2. Technology: Virginia programs have kept reasonably up-to-date with technology enhancements. VPLC has a web site on line with information about statewide issues and information about local programs (VPLC.ORG). It will continue expanding its web site and develop links to local programs. LSCV has a web site under construction (LSCV.ORG) that will have a direct link to VPLC.

This planning process has resulted in the development of a statewide technology enhancement plan that will ultimately result in web sites for Virginia's local programs. LSCV will fund implementation of the technology plan. In furtherance of this goal, LSCV has already

applied for a special appropriation within the Governor's budget. LSCV has also sought and received the promised support of the Virginia Senate Finance Committee Chair for funding its technology plan through legislative amendment, if not successful in the Governor's budget process. The plan when fully implemented will: 1) employ a full-time computer and communications expert through the statewide support and training center; 2) establish a statewide e-mail system; 3) upgrade computer hardware statewide; 4) establish uniform case management and timekeeping systems; 5) establish a substantive on-line bulletin board and document bank for poverty law issues; 6) establish an automated document assembly system; 7) establish and standardize computerized research capability; 8) provide statewide computer training and support; 9) establish automated and/or centralized intake systems for multi-branch programs where feasible and appropriate; 10) establish automated phone and voice mail messaging systems where appropriate; and 11) establish the aforementioned linked web sites for LSCV, the statewide support center, migrant program and local programs.

With implementation of the technology plan, programs will apply for funds and report with standardized software and ultimately, electronically. Programs will also use standardized case management software. This will enhance LSCV's ability to collect reliable data on program work. Minimum standards will be set for hardware in each program and every case handler will have a computer. A fully implemented technology plan will enhance client services and support program management. It will improve every aspect of client representation from intake through extended representation. A central resource would provide a focal point for conceptualizing and implementing the full uses of technology system wide. Hands-on support for programs would carry out a technology plan that rationalizes needs and provides a process for meeting them. For example, addressing resource needs such as compatible servers and software would enable programs to share information for education, research and reporting purposes; report consistent statewide case management statistics; and share briefs and pleadings on-line. Attorneys could link with specialized centers and web sites for legal research.

Applications of technology for client education and outreach need expansion. A standardized telephone system already is underway by the State Bar to allow the public to locate legal assistance or obtain information about housing or divorce, for example, by punching in numbers. Voice mail is used by some programs to provide general information and collect messages for local offices at specified times. Programs also could use their own or centrally produced video tapes to provide client information.

The following goals with supporting strategies and action items will address these needs.

II. Technology

Goal One: Increase the capacity of the system to support programs in planning and coordinating technology for purposes to include (1) streamlining administration, (2) addressing substantive issues of law, and (3) increasing client access to services

Strategies:

- (a) Place technology support in a place (statewide support center) conducive to bridging the worlds of management and law
- (b) Involve local program staff experienced with technology in system-wide planning and problem resolution
- (c) Encourage programs to innovate, try pilot projects, and share best practices and methods
- (d) Increase financial resources dedicated to system wide technology enhancement

Action Items:

- Form an advisory committee of technology responsible people from the programs
- Request additional state appropriation targeted to technology
- Fund additional staff at VPLC or employ a contractor

Goal Two: Use software applications to consistently link legal services technology systems and to transmit information in compatible formats for case management and reporting

Strategies:

- (a) Ensure the capacity of each program to import and export compatible data
- (b) Support programs in choosing new softwares that meet program needs and contribute to system wide compatibility
- (c) Build-on the existing compatibility in software that is indicated by the recent technology survey

Action Items:

- Conduct an in-depth survey to identify the actual hardware and software components used by programs and how these components are being applied
- Define criteria for exporting and importing compatible data
- Develop guidelines for programs to use when updating or considering new technology

Goal Three: Ensure that program staff understand and can use technology tools

Strategies:

- (a) Provide training to introduce staff to technology applications
- (b) Provide training to update technology skills, as needed
- (c) Use technology to deal with changes in substantive law and related management practices (i.e. changes in benefit programs and electronic transfer of benefits)

Action Items:

- Offer annual introductory and skill based training statewide

- Offer site-specific technical support

Goal Four: Use the capacity of the internet to support staff education and research and to provide educational materials to clients about legal issues and available resources

Strategies:

- (a) Encourage sufficient internet access for each program office
- (b) Identify and link with existing sites for staff education and research
- (c) Add to Virginia resources currently accessible on the internet
- (d) Increase the availability and interactive uses of automation for clients needing legal services
- (e) Explore using LSCV and VPLC web sites as hosts for local programs

Action Items:

- Create, in the most useful format for an electronic brief, pleadings and decisions bank
- Create an electronic community information library with basic information that the poverty population can access through public libraries, social services offices and other locations
- Create an interactive information source to guide clients through questions and answers relevant to their legal needs

Goal Five: Achieve consensus on minimum technology standards and expectations to ensure intra and inter program communication

Strategies:

- (a) Ensure a common base of information and understanding about technology to support decision making and ensure timely consensus reflecting changes in user needs and technological advancements
- (b) Provide on-going proposals and opportunities for system wide consideration
- (c) Adopt technology goals that programs can use as measures of progress

Action Items:

- Hold an annual conference to provide information and share applications
- Develop and make available continually updated information on new technology
- Develop ten standards to be met by every program over time such as specified use of windows programs, pentium hardware capacity, and desk top access to the internet for advocates
- Evaluate achievement of the standards through the LSCV evaluation process

Goal Six: Designate and allocate resources, at least annually, to upgrade and standardize technology across the system

Strategies:

- (a) Increase funding to ensure that technology is current and useful
- (b) Use cost effective teleconferencing to reduce travel costs for task force meetings
- (c) Ensure that funding distribution methods are equitable to encourage use and updating of technology

Action Items:

- Seek additional general fund support for technology initiatives
- Purchase good speaker phone equipment for teleconferencing
- Develop equitable fund distribution methodology

Goal Seven: Integrate automated and telephone technology to improve customer service

Strategies:

- (a) Share ways that programs use voice mail to support professional staff and clients
- (b) Implement and evaluate automated systems in terms of efficiency and sensitivity to social and cultural differences among clients
- (c) Employ interactive systems to collect data and provide tailored information to callers

Action Items:

- Develop a plan for automated customer services that meet system and local needs
- Design systems that facilitate data collection
- Include customer satisfaction with automated systems as part of LSCV's evaluation

3. Reducing Barriers: Barriers include those created or exacerbated by societal conditions and those specific to program operations. Discrimination frequently is based on factors that include race, class, life style, sexual orientation, homelessness, sex, age, disability and, more recently, aids. The poor have long faced barriers simply because they are poor and this may be intensifying because of a fusion of public thinking about social problems and poverty. Similarly, funding cuts that reduce or curtail social programs change the environment in ways that may subtly intimidate or co-opt organizations and their clients who now have fewer rights and time limited benefits. The visibility of such issues has been affected by curtailment of grass roots lobbying by legal services programs which also affects other organizations.

Specific to legal service programs, barriers include restrictions on types of clients, advocacy and class actions, diversion of resources to meet increased regulations, and reduced access to national back-up centers. Resource limitations allow legal services to handle only one of five potential cases. Overcoming program specific barriers could include expanded pro bono hot lines to provide clients with advice and self help opportunities; increased circuit riding in programs that have already established this as an effective way to regularly get staff out to clients; and addressing insensitivity concerns by involving clients in staff training and staff meetings. Mediation through existing centers could be further tapped.

Programs need additional options for providing education about the law and processes to clients. In addition clients and programs need uniform support from the Bar, judiciary and the courts. Some courts are more willing than others to give good referral advice such as putting the name and number of legal services onto an eviction notice warrant. Additionally, standardization by the Court of IFP filing forms would make the same forms available to pro se clients statewide. The courts and law libraries could make community education materials more available.

While there may be some clients who can represent themselves, legal services representation and litigation must remain a viable option for all potential clients. To support this option and to provide increased advice for pro se clients, programs could pursue increases in funding, efficiency and pro bono services and a comprehensive means of providing unrestricted legal services across the state.

Both the Virginia State Bar and the Virginia Bar Association have Access to Legal Services Committees that are active in assisting the delivery system in reducing barriers to access for poor people. Members of the Virginia Legal Services community participate in the work of those committees. The Virginia State Bar has recently been surveying client service organizations throughout Virginia and publishes a comprehensive directory of services available to clients (**Attachments 8 + 9**).

The following goals supported by strategies and action items will address these needs.

III. Reducing Barriers

Goal One: Within permissible limits, work with community stakeholders including Bar committees engaged in access issues, courts, local officials, and funding sources to provide the poverty population with access to a full range of services

Strategies:

- (a) Encourage removing restrictions at the national level so that legal services programs can provide clients with a full range of services
- (b) Expand the range of legal service options within programs
- (c) Expand linkages with other providers to reach special population groups

Action Items:

- LSCV continue efforts at working with LSC to encourage removal of the restrictions
- Document legal access issues and request agenda time from State Bar committees
- Stronger link with providers such as the ACLU and cancer groups
- Consider internal program changes to strengthen community involvement

Goal Two: Develop good pro se materials and remedies for appropriate use, but avoid

emphasizing pro se to the extent that client rights are jeopardized

Strategies:

- (a) Pursue with the access committees of the statewide Bars simplification of legal procedures that create barriers for poor people representing themselves
- (b) Work with the judiciary to increase client access to legal services providers and programs
- (c) Seek specific directives from the Supreme Court to simplify access of the poverty population to legal services

Action Items:

- Support clarification of what information and assistance court clerks may provide to pro se clients
- Work directly with the Supreme Court on remedies such as pro se clinics at the court house and adding information on how to contact legal services on forms distributed by the courts
- Work with the newly created small claims courts in each judicial district
- Create simplified processes for obtaining a divorce

Goal Three: Increase visibility of legal services across the state

Strategies:

- (a) Develop supportive working relationships with the courts
- (b) Simplify clients' access to individual programs
- (c) Link with other organizations to get materials distributed

Action Items:

- Initiate Court Access Projects
- Request the State Bars to include legal services materials with their widely distributed publications

Goal Four: Establish community education programs through the schools and adult education so people understand how to access and use the legal system

Goal Five: Ensure that eligible non English speaking clients and clients with disabilities are provided effective and high quality services

4. Training: Training and other support to local programs is highly valued in Virginia. When federal cuts eliminated support centers in many states, LSCV fully replaced lost federal funds to the Virginia Poverty Law Center with IOLTA funding. In addition to training, VPLC provides consultation on case law, facilitates statewide task forces, publishes the Poverty Law Review and disseminates a wide range of printed and computerized information to keep program staff informed and up to date on legal developments.

VPLC is supported by the programs for the high quality of its training and information services. It monitors new developments and keeps the system up to date through monthly publications and task forces on strategies and techniques. Local programs provide additional training for staff. Private and public pro bono lawyers also have access to continuing legal education training and conferences sponsored by VPLC. The Virginia State Bar conducts an annual statewide pro bono training conference with the assistance of VPLC and local programs. Since the federal funding cuts in 1996, VPLC has not only maintained its staff, but continues to grow with new sources of funding added to LSCV's. Training and support in Virginia has been most negatively affected by the loss of national back-up centers. This has put additional pressures on VPLC to increase training and provide advocacy in areas where programs are prohibited by federal restrictions..

In the future, the complexity of legal issues faced by programs will only increase. Therefore maintenance of VPLC is critically important as is restoration, at the national level, of free services from support centers in specialized areas of law. In Virginia, methods will be explored for increasing access to more regional training and using technology. Program leaders and staff will have more opportunities for involvement in the planning and assessment of training. Technology supported legal research also will be explored as will greater outreach to pro bono attorneys to increase the participation of the private sector in legal service programs and training and to perhaps package some aspects of local training for distribution statewide.

The following goals supported by strategies and action items will address these needs.

IV. Training

Goal One: Maintain the capacity of the Virginia Poverty Law Center to continue providing high quality training, publications and other services.

Strategies:

- (a) Support appropriate allocation of funds to support the Center as a statewide resource
- (b) Increase staff capacity in priority areas to support field programs
- (c) Establish a new workgroup to discuss issues in management of legal work

Action Items:

- LSCV continue central allocation of funds
- Add capacity to support technology
- Provide useful feedback on training offered and needed

Goal Two: Enhance participation and uses of the "Poverty Law Review" as a means of communication

Strategies:

- (a) Increase submissions from the field for the "Poverty Law Review"

- (b) Encourage diversity of submissions including and in addition to case notes
- (c) Use the “Poverty Law Review” as follow-up to training and task forces

Action Items:

- Promote the “Poverty Law Review” as an opportunity to reach every staff person
- Support staff in developing materials for submission
- Include task force summaries / excerpts in the “Poverty Law Review”

Goal Three: Expand training opportunities on a regional basis

Strategies:

- (a) Increase capacity to follow-up state training with related topics offered in locations across the state
- (b) Localize or regionalize some training to reduce overnight travel for local program staff
- (c) Increase availability of information on legal aid specialists in the community who serve as resources on various topics

Action Items:

- VPLC assist with follow-up to state training
- Offer training in core locations, to extent feasible
- Develop list of community resource specialists
- Develop basic training on resources for new advocacy staff of local programs

Goal Four: Increase field involvement in assessing training needs and delivery options

Strategies:

- (a) Ensure periodic feedback opportunities at the state and local level
- (b) Encourage staff to express training and development needs

Action Items:

- Establish an annual opportunity for VPLC and field leadership to confer on training needs for the year
- Develop additional methods at the local and state level to get staff input
- Strengthen local participation in the training committee

Goal Five: Support restoring the national training centers and their capacity to respond to the field

Goal Six: Restore interstate training capacity by approaching other states in this region

5. Pro Bono Services: Currently, excellent pro bono work is done across

the state. Programs and their clients benefit from thousands of pro bono attorneys who provide extended representation and work on hotlines through LSC funded legal services programs, independently funded service organizations and privately (See Attachments 8 + 9). Programs also benefit from private attorney involvement at a reduced fee. Pro Bono resources are most prevalent in urban areas where there are large law firms and law schools. Rural areas, including those that are part of service areas with an urban center, have more difficulty in accessing academic and private sector pro bono support.

The Virginia State Bar, the Virginia Bar Association and the Virginia Trial Lawyers Association have continually supported and worked with LSCV and local programs to increase pro bono. They provide training opportunities, advertise and highlight pro bono opportunities, fund a statewide pro bono coordinator and coordinate and implement local program hotlines.

Looking ahead, programs will explore ways to share and recruit additional pro bono resources. These include marketing programs, targeted outreach to retired attorneys and parents at home with children, and peer requests. Some programs are exploring the potential to share resources through technology and pilot programs where one program can refer pre-screened clients to receive assistance from attorneys associated with another program. The greatest difficulty in this potential pilot program will be educating non-resident attorneys on local court procedures and other matters.

At the most recent VPLC sponsored Annual Training Conference, the Virginia Bar Association met with other bar leaders and legal services program directors and pro bono coordinators to explore the advisability of a statewide pro bono hotline.

The following goals supported by strategies and action items will address these needs.

V. Pro Bono Services

Goal One: Maintain and improve the Neighborhood Assistance Tax Credit Act that provides participation incentive and off-sets reduced fee private attorney involvement

Goal Two: Explore ways to share pro bono resources among programs

Strategies:

- (a) Encourage areas with high pro bono resources to support areas with fewer pro bono resources
- (b) Support the Pro Bono Coordinators Network
- (c) Develop and pilot models for coordinated hot line staffing between urban and rural programs that may include a single number for clients to call, referral of clients already triaged by paralegal staff, and monitoring of client satisfaction.

Action Items:

- Facilitate and work with VBA on pilot program of sharing pro bono resources between service areas
- Implement pilot concepts
- Work with Pro Bono Coordinators Network to establish effective hotlines

Goal Three: Strengthen ways to increase legal and other pro bono participation at the local level

Strategies:

- (a) Diversify recruitment approaches
- (b) Expand types of pro bono resources
- (c) Increase visibility and effective timing of pro bono requests

Action Items:

- Develop marketing program to include advertising successes of the program, explaining program at local Bar and community meetings, and involving business community resources
- Reach out to retired attorneys, parents at home with children, para-legals
- Make peer to peer requests, use big firms, and link recruitment with the fund campaign
- Request State Bar Access Committee to work with State Bar Publicity Committee on marketing promotions and public service spots

Goal Four: Implement Technology plan to facilitate increased pro bono participation

6. Financial Resources: With almost \$2 million in federal funding cuts in 1996, Virginia's legal services programs received immediate replacement funding from LSCV so that no loss of services was suffered by clients. Virginia is one of only three states that receive both filing fee and general revenue appropriations. Because LSCV administers the IOLTA program, this revenue is dedicated solely to legal services programs. Since 1996, programs have worked hard to find additional funding sources. Local government funding in Virginia is a national model and United Way and other private and public grants add to an incredibly diverse funding structure. This year, system wide funding will exceed \$15 million annually. Virginia is close to the top ten states for per capita funding for legal services. LSCV has an almost 25 year history of legislative funding advocacy at the Virginia General Assembly and with Virginia's federal delegation. The success of the system's funding, whether statewide or local is based on the strengths of local legislative contacts through program staff and boards. LSCV relies on these contacts while coordinating the statewide effort. This historically successful, local approach to statewide funding, coordinated by LSCV, is probably the most compelling reason to not substantially alter the current configuration of Legal Services programs in Virginia.

Although primarily dependent on the recognized quality of programs, fund raising strategies include annual campaigns and targeted appeals. Additionally, partnership with the state

bar and other entities increases awareness and the potential for increased funding. The Virginia Trial Lawyers Association lends its considerable support in advocating for increased funding for legal services at the legislature and the other statewide bars, as well as religious groups. AARP and other statewide organizations advocate actively and vocally.

The following goals supported by strategies and action items will address these needs.

VI. Financial Resources

Goal One: Increase the amount of local funding and the overall capacity of programs to raise money

Strategies:

- (a) Increase awareness of fund raising sources and methods
- (b) Gain from inter-program communication and support, including mentoring arrangements

Action Items:

- Identify the range of funding sources used across the state from existing reports
- Promote information sharing and inter-program collaboration about local fund raising methods

Goal Two: Reinvigorate support from the Private Bar for legal services funding

Strategies:

- (a) Keep the Bar regularly informed about program accomplishments
- (b) Participate actively in Bar meetings and committees
- (c) Ensure that Legal Services representatives to Bar activities are informed of program director interests and concerns

Action Items:

- Update the Joint Committee Report to build on the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission
- Convene a joint one day meeting to review legal services accomplishments since the last report

Goal Three: Explore the potential of the Community Reinvestment Act as a means of generating financial support from banks

Goal Four: Maintain and enhance legislative funding support

Strategies:

- (a) LSCV maintain a legislative presence with individuals and committees
- (b) Program Directors ensure quality and visibility for programs in the community

Action Items:

- Support maintenance of appropriations for on-going operations
- Seek funding for expanded services and new initiatives
- Maintain quality services in local communities

7. System Structure: The legal services system consists of thirteen local programs which deliver legal services and are supported and convened for planning and education by the Legal Services Corporation of Virginia and the Virginia Poverty Law Center. LSCV provides oversight and accountability to state funding sources and administers program participation in group benefits. This flexible network ensures high quality legal services for the poverty population across the state while remaining responsive to local and regional differences. LSCV also provides political insulation to programs. Programs develop pro bono and funding resources with statewide bars' and LSCV's assistance. LSCV maintains state and federal relationships and promotes high quality legal services in the Commonwealth. The Corporation manages funds, such as IOLTA and legislative appropriations, and a statewide grants process, supplemented by systematic program evaluation. VPLC keeps the system current with legal developments through means such as training, case consultation, research, task forces and publications.

Looking ahead, a concern is how to increase the integration among programs to ensure that clients receive consistent and compatible services regardless of where they live. A related concern is how to provide a full range of client services to clients eligible under current federal parameters and those excluded by recent restrictions. The range of reconfiguration models identified and studied over the past three years includes consolidation or merger of programs, a parallel delivery system, regionalization, program splitting, swapping of service areas, and increased statewide capacity, perhaps through VPLC or the currently unrestricted Charlottesville program to provide unrestricted services. Comparison of these models indicates that none assures the current statewide coverage and balance between flexibility and system integrity.

Through all of the planning processes undertaken since 1995, Virginia planners have examined other state models of system reconfiguration. Washington state provided the most extreme example of that by creating two parallel delivery systems, though it and other states that have reconfigured this way had fewer programs in the mix and therefore, less history and institutionalization of local programs to consider. During the many meetings over the past three years devoted solely to this subject, several things have **never** been made clear to Virginia planners. First, that states that have reconfigured by forming one statewide federally funded program predicated on centralized telephonic intake are providing better, more effective, more efficient services to clients. LSC's report on centralized intake systems shows examples of states that have severely disrupted and reduced client services to implement unproven systems where

clients interact with a phone system for 20 minutes to a half hour before they talk to a real person. For every proponent of these changes, you can find an opponent. In Washington's reconfiguration, many legal services advocates were laid off and client services were reduced. It is our understanding that Washington may have over-centralized, at least in the intake process and may be addressing methods to re-localize some services. Most, if not all other states that have so extremely reconfigured, are much smaller than Virginia and don't permit fair comparison. There is absolutely no evidence that major reconfiguration and disruption of a good delivery system like Virginia's will be more efficient or cost effective. Currently, LSCV oversees a statewide system with a budget that amounts to less than 4% of just state and IOLTA revenue. Programs, long ago, learned to do more with less, and on the whole, are models of cost efficiency. What the evidence does indicate is that a parallel delivery system would require much more funding than the present system. Without the additional funding, staff and clients would suffer the result. We are committed in Virginia to maintaining staff and client service levels to the extent possible.

With the federal funding cuts in 1996, Virginia made sure that its statewide support center remained fully funded to handle certain kinds of advocacy that were now prohibited by federal restrictions. It also funded a new statewide migrant and immigrant services program to provide a full range of services to those populations. Finally, after exhaustive study and reporting by a committee of LSCV's board, it was determined that the impact of federal restrictions on many programs was minimal. Many of these Virginia programs have been very creative in ensuring that their client populations have a full range of services available to them. This approach of working within the restrictions has been strengthened by reports from organizations like CLASP that 95% of the work can still be done. Some programs reported negative effects for their clients however, and so LSCV encouraged those programs to propose methods for delivering unrestricted services. One program, so far has done so, and another will soon join it. This will result in one less LSC funded program in Virginia for 1999. Several other programs are discussing the possibility of merged operations.

LSCV will continue to address this issue and maintain on-going discussions with programs about ways to expand the availability of unrestricted services statewide. The number of programs or their size will not be the driving force behind this continued discussion, rather the availability of a full range of services to clients in Virginia without major disruption of services and within funding constraints, will. One of the ways LSCV will explore this will be to investigate ways to expand the experiments already under way in two Virginia programs.

While planners could reach no consensus on a broad based plan to reconfigure the delivery system, because no model was presented that offered any significant administrative efficiencies that aren't accomplished in the present one and no model provided the important legislative and funding benefits of a local authority model, they agreed that the current system can be enhanced, by taking significant steps toward better integration. As indicated throughout this report, such steps enhance the capacity and uses of technology, create standards and models for intake and referrals, shared pro bono resources, coordinated hotlines and increased training

opportunities. Programs have expressed the commitment to ensuring these improvements through an expansion of LSCV's staff to coordinate implementation of the action items.

The following goals supported by strategies and action items will address these needs.

VII. System Structure

Goal One: Achieve greater integration among programs to ensure that clients receive consistent and compatible services from the legal services system across the state

Strategies:

- (a) Establish and monitor system wide standards of service delivery and technology
- (b) Maintain high quality training and technical assistance and impact advocacy through VPLC
- (c) Encourage interprogram collaboration to enhance client services and resources
- (d) Ensure periodic assessment of progress and emerging issues or opportunities
- (e) Increase LSCV staff to implement plan action items

Action Items:

- Carry out strategies and action items as specified in preceding sections of this plan.
- Conduct on-going planning and evaluation for system enhancement

Goal Two: Strive to provide a full range of services across the state through internal and external structural changes in programs, as appropriate

Strategies:

- (a) Encourage each program to engage in an internal review to determine the best structure and methods for their program to provide the maximum range of services feasible within the restrictions.
- (b) Support programs that chose external reconfiguration to enhance the services available within existing or expanded service areas
- (c) Support programs that choose internal reconfiguration to enhance services in an existing area through community involvement

Action Items:

- LSCV and VPLC provide consultative services to project directors
- LSCV and VPLC provide support for relevant task forces
- Programs conduct assessment and take appropriate internal and external actions, as appropriate

Goal Three: Support sharing of resources among programs and overall resource enhancement to extend the range of services available throughout the state

Strategies:

- (a) Encourage sharing of professional and technical resources among programs to address client needs for unrestricted services
- (b) Develop fiscal methods to facilitate an increased range of services
- (c) Explore and share information about various models for increasing the range of services across the state

Action Items:

- LSCV develop effective appropriation requests and money management strategies
- LSCV and VPLC provide relevant support for program efforts

Action Plan for Legal Services in Virginia
Schedule of Action Items

I. Intake and Delivery of Advice and Referral Services

Goals	Action Items	Primary Responsibility	Target Date
1) Enhance the statewide consistency, quality and timeliness of intake and referral services through greater standardization among and within programs	- Add staff to support planning among programs	LSCV	October 1998
	- Develop a standard model for case acceptance and financial eligibility with uniform definitions that programs use to conform their policies or document reasonable expectations	LSCV	October 1998
	- Establish benchmarks for the time by which intake activities are accomplished in every program (start with those that can be readily resolved)	LSCV in conjunction with VPLC	January 1999
	- Develop standard definitions of case, case action, case closure and related terms	LSCV	April 1999
2) Ensure that on-going program operations measurably enhance system integration on behalf of clients	- Develop action plans to conform program policies to statewide expectations or document reasons for exceptions	Programs	July 1999
	- Require reporting of data in standardized formats, supported, to the	LSCV	July 1999

	<p>extent feasible, by technology</p> <p>- Monitor program compliance through the LSCV evaluation and grants process</p>	LSCV	On-going
3) Improve client access by increased sharing of technology and resources among programs	<p>- Develop the capacity to electronically provide callers with basic information legal services and programs</p> <p>- Develop the capacity to gather basic client information (i.e. name, phone number, and reason for call) when offices are closed or lines are busy</p> <p>- Each program makes electronic communication available to callers where appropriate</p>	<p>Technology Advisory Committee</p> <p>Technology Advisory Committee</p> <p>Programs</p>	<p>Consistent with related items</p> <p>Consistent with related items</p> <p>As technology is available</p>
4) Develop statewide standards of practice and quality control for advice only and on-going representation cases and review mechanisms for intake to ensure correct advice and representation when necessary	- Develop specifics based on experience with action items associated with goal one	LSCV	January 2000
5) Ensure that each program monitors the impact of restrictions on clients and develops feasible ways for clients to have available a lawyer with an appropriate range of legal options	<p>- Identify a range of resources within each service area</p> <p>- Access VPLC resources for cases with statewide parameters</p> <p>- Arrange for purchase of legal services</p>	<p>Programs</p> <p>Programs</p> <p>Programs</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p>

	from other programs or elsewhere, as necessary		
6) Ensure service access to special needs populations including persons with disabilities and persons for whom English is not a first language	- Develop specifics based on experience with other items throughout this plan	LSCV, VPLC and Programs	On-going

II. Technology

Goals	Action Items	Primary Responsibility	Target Date
1) Increase the capacity of the system to support programs in planning and coordinating technology for purposes to include (1) streamlining administration, (2) addressing substantive issues of law, and (3) increasing client access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Form an advisory committee of technology responsible people from the programs - Request additional state appropriation targeted to technology - Fund additional staff at VPLC or employ a contractor 	LSCV LSCV LSCV	January 1999 January 1999 July 1999
2) Use software applications to consistently link legal services technology systems and to transmit information in compatible formats for case management and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct an in-depth survey of software and its use by programs - Define criteria for exporting and importing compatible data 	LSCV Advisory committee and LSCV staff	April 1999 September 1999

	- Develop guidelines for agencies to use when updating software or considering new software	Advisory Committee and LSCV staff	December 1999
3) Ensure that program staff understand and can use technology tools	- Offer introductory and skill based training statewide	VPLC	Annual
	- Offer site-specific technical assistance	LSCV technology staff	On-going
4) Use the internet to support staff education and research and to provide educational materials to clients about legal issues and available resources	- Create, in the most useful format, an electronic brief, pleadings and decisions bank	VPLC with technical support	December 1999
	- Create an electronic community information library that can be readily accessed by the poverty population	VPLC with technical support	July 1999
	- Create an interactive information source to guide clients through questions and answers relevant to their legal needs	To be determined	January 2003
5) Achieve consensus on minimum technology standards and expectations to ensure intra and inter program communication	- Hold an annual conference to provide information and share applications	VPLC	Annual
	- Develop and make available continually updated information on relevant new technology	Advisory Committee	On-going
	- Develop ten standards to be met by every program over time	Advisory Committee with	October 1999

	- Evaluate achievement of the standards as part of LSCV evaluation	technical staff LSCV	On-going
6) Designate and allocate resources, at least annually, to up grade and standardize technology across the system	- Seek additional general fund support for technology initiatives	LSCV	January 1999
	- Purchase good speaker phone equipment for teleconferencing	VPLC	July 1999
	- Employ equitable fund distribution methodology	LSCV	On - going
7) Integrate automated and telephone technology to improve customer service	- Develop plan for automated customer services that meet local and system needs	Advisory Committee	2000
	- Design systems that facilitate data collection	Advisory Committee	2000
	- Include customer satisfaction in LSCV evaluation	LSCV	On-going

III. Barrier Reduction

Goals	Action Items	Primary Responsibility	Target Date
1) Within permissible limits, work with community stakeholders including Bar Committees engaged in access issues,	- LSCV continue efforts at working with LSC to encourage removal of the restrictions	LSCV	On-going

courts, local officials, and funding sources to provide the poverty population with access to a full range of services	- Document legal access issues and request agenda time from State Bar	Project Director representatives	To be determined
	- Link with providers such as ACLU and cancer groups	Programs	On-going
	- Consider internal program changes to strengthen community involvement	Programs	On-going
2) Develop good Pro se materials and remedies for appropriate use, but avoid over emphasizing pro se to the extent that client rights are jeopardized	- Support clarification of what information and assistance court clerks may provide to pro se clients	Programs and Courts	To be determined
	- Work directly with the Supreme Court on remedies such as pro se clinics at the court house and adding information on how to contact legal services to forms distributed by the courts	LSCV and Supreme Court	To be determined
	- Work with the newly created small claims courts in every judicial district	Programs and Claims Courts	On-going
	- Create simplified processes for obtaining a divorce	LSCV and General Assembly	To be determined
3) Increase visibility of legal services across the state	- Initiate Court Access Projects	Programs	As appropriate
	- Request the State Bars to include legal services materials with their widely distributed publications	LSCV and VPLC	To be determined
4) Establish community education	- Develop as the plan progresses	Programs and	To be

programs through the schools and adult education so people understand how to access and use the judicial system		VPLC	determined
5) Ensure that eligible non English speaking clients and clients with disabilities are provided effective and high quality services	- Incorporate in related goals	Programs	On-going

IV. Training

Goals	Action Items	Primary Responsibility	Target Date
1) Maintain the capacity of the Virginia Poverty Law Center to continue providing high quality programs and materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LSCV continue central allocation of funds - Consider adding staff to support technology - Increase feedback on training offered and needed 	LSCV VPLC and LSCV Programs	On-going July 1999 On-going
2) Enhance uses of the "Poverty Law Review"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote the "Poverty Law Review" as an opportunity to reach each staff person - Support staff in developing materials for submission - Include task force summaries / excerpts 	VPLC and Programs Programs VPLC	On-going On-going On-going
3) Expand training opportunities on a regional basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - VPLC assist with follow-up to state training - Offer training in core locations, to extent feasible - Maintain list of community resource specialists - Develop basic training on resources for 	VPLC and Programs VPLC VPLC VPLC and Programs	On-going As feasible On-going To be determined

	new paralegal and advocate staff of local programs		
4) Increase field involvement in assessing training needs and delivery options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish annual opportunity for VPLC and field leaders to confer - Develop additional methods for staff input - Strengthen local participation on training committee 	VPLC and Programs VPLC Programs	Annual On-going On-going
5) Support restoring the national training centers and their capacity to respond to questions from the field on matters of special law	- Communicate with appropriate entities	LSCV and VPLC	On-going
6) Restore interstate training by approaching other states in the region	- Make individual and group contacts	VPLC	

V. Pro Bono Services

Goals	Action Items	Primary Responsibility	Target Date
1) Maintain and improve the Neighborhood Assistance Credit Act to off set reduced fee private attorney involvement	- To be developed as plan progresses	LSCV and Programs	To be determined
2) Work with the circuit based pro bono committees, if they are established by the State Bar, to increase pro bono resources	- Monitor progress of State Bar - Determine best ways to interact in the districts	LSCV LSCV and programs	On-going To be determined
3) Explore ways to share pro bono resources among programs	- Arrange for programs to refer calls to specialist attorneys associated with another program - Apply for VBA grant funding for a pilot among two or more programs - Implement pilot concepts if grant is received - Work with the Pro Bono Coordinators Network to establish effective local hot lines	Programs Participating Programs Participating programs Programs	On-going November 1998 July 1999 On-going
4) Strengthen ways to increase legal and	- Develop marketing program to include	Programs	On-going

other pro bono participation in localities	advertising successes, explaining program at Bar and community meetings, and involving business community resources	Programs	On-going
	- Reach out to retired attorneys, parents at home with children, paralegals	Programs	On- going
	- Make peer to peer requests, use peer pressure by involving large firm, and link with fund campaign		

VI. Financial Resources

Goals	Action Items	Primary Responsibility	Target Date
1) Enhance the capacity of programs to raise increased amounts of local funds	- Identify the range of funding sources from existing reports	LSCV	November and on-going
	- Promote interprogram information sharing and collaboration regarding fund raising methods	LSCV and programs	On-going
2) Reinvigorate support from the State Bar for legal services funding	- Update the IOLTA Report building on the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission	LSCV	To be determined
	- Convene a joint meeting with the Bar to review legal services accomplishment	LSCV and State Bar	To be determined
3) Explore the potential of the Community	- To be developed as the plan progresses	LSCV	To be

Reinvestment Act as a means of generating financial support from banks			determined
4) Maintain and enhance legislative support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support funding for on-going operations - Seek funding for expansion and new initiatives - Maintain quality services in local communities 	LSCV LSCV Programs	On-going January 1999 and as appropriate On-going

VII. System Structure

Goals	Action Items	Primary Responsibility	Target Date
1) Achieve greater integration among programs to ensure that clients receive consistent and compatible services from the legal services system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carry out strategies and action items as specified in preceding sections of this plan - Conduct on-going planning and evaluation for system enhancement 	Programs, LSCV and VPLC LSC and Programs	As previously specified On-going
2) Strive to provide a full range of services across the state through internal and external structural changes in programs, as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programs conduct assessment and take internal or external structural actions as appropriate - Provide programs with consultative support 	Programs LSC and VPLC LSC and VPLC	On-going On-going As feasible

	- Provide support for relevant task forces		
3) Support sharing of resources among programs and overall resource enhancement to extend the range of services available throughout the state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide information and facilitation for program collaboration - Develop statewide resource requests and money management strategies - Support local fund raising 	LSCV and VPLC LSCV LSCV	As feasible On-going On-going